

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Biological Survey

FOR DIVISION OF INFORMATION

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Waterfowl Observers Take to Air,
Car, and Boats for Annual Inventory

Some 3,000 employees and cooperators of the Bureau of Biological Survey are now (January) estimating the number of wild ducks, geese, and swans throughout the United States and Alaska. Under the leadership of 10 regional directors the corps of observers making the sixth annual waterfowl inventory are using blimps, airplanes, autogiros, boats, automobiles, and snowshoes to get to the waterfowl concentration areas.

Last year Survey experts estimated that there were between 55 and 60 million migratory waterfowl on the continent. Inventory figures are not to be considered as accurate counts of waterfowl populations, Survey officials declared, but rather as valuable indications of the trends of bird populations. The migratory waterfowl hunting regulations are drafted each year partly on the basis of these trends.

Waterfowl inventories, a report to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes explained, are taken during January because the birds are on their wintering grounds and seldom move from one concentration area to another. Because the flocks are almost at a standstill, the report pointed out, there is less likelihood of duplication in observations.

All States are covered in the nation-wide "counts," but most observers are working along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts and in the Mississippi River Valley.

Cooperating in the inventory are the National Park Service, Army Air Corps, the Naval Air Service, Coast Guard, Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, State forestry, game, and fish departments, commercial organizations, and private citizens.

Describing the method of making waterfowl estimates, Survey officials stated that observers in each of the 10 regions in North America report their findings to the regional leader. Returns from the various regions are tabulated, summarized, and sent to Washington, where Frederick C. Lincoln, who is in general charge of the inventory work, and his staff compile the estimated totals for the various species.

Field observers are picked men who have had long experience in this type of work, it was said. Each observer is sent to the same area year after year so that increasing accuracy may be attained in appraising increases or decreases in waterfowl numbers. Many areas, particularly those having heavy bird concentrations, are covered simultaneously by air, auto, and boat so that observers can compare notes and estimates with one another.

The results of the inventory will probably be published early in June.